



Satellite image with enhanced low cloud-top temperatures (degrees C) for 7:15 a.m. EDT (NOAA)

### **Agricultural Weather Highlights - Wednesday - December 17, 2003**

- ***In the West***, mild, mostly dry weather prevails. However, an unsettled weather pattern in recent weeks has aided ***Northwestern*** winter grains and improved ***Western*** snow packs.
- ***On the Plains***, high winds—accompanied by mild conditions—are howling across ***northern portions of the region***, eroding winter wheat's protective snow cover and leaving the poorly established crop exposed to potential weather extremes. Elsewhere, extremely dry conditions persist on the ***southern High Plains*** in the wake of Monday's dust storm, while winter wheat on the ***central Plains*** continues to benefit from recent snowfall and topsoil moisture improvements.
- ***In the Corn Belt***, cold weather lingers, accompanied by snow showers across ***eastern parts of the region***. In the ***southern and eastern Corn Belt***, soil moisture for winter wheat remains adequate to locally excessive.
- ***In the South***, locally heavy showers linger across ***Florida***, while cool, dry weather prevails elsewhere. Recent showers have aided ***Southern*** pastures and winter grains, although cool weather has slowed crop development.

**Outlook:** For the remainder of today, the third major coastal storm system in less than 2 weeks will affect the ***Northeast***. Rain and snow will fall across the ***central Appalachians and Mid-Atlantic States***, while a rapidly intensifying storm will produce high winds and heavy precipitation in the ***Northeast***, where flooding may occur. Downwind of the ***Great Lakes***, snow showers and breezy conditions will persist through week's end. Farther south, northerly winds will drive cold air into the ***southern Atlantic States***, although freezes are not expected in ***Florida's citrus belt***. Meanwhile, a ridge of high pressure will provide mild, mostly dry weather in the ***West***. The NWS 6- to 10-day outlook for December 22-26 calls for near- to above-normal temperatures across much of the U.S. Cooler-than-normal weather will be limited to the ***Gulf Coast region***. Above-normal precipitation is forecast in the ***Atlantic and Gulf Coast States*** and in coastal areas of the ***Pacific Northwest and northern California***, while, below-normal precipitation is expected across the ***Southwest, Plains, and upper Midwest***.

**Contact:** Brad Rippey, Agricultural Meteorologist, USDA/OCE/WAOB, Washington, D.C. (202-720-2397)

**Web Site:** <http://www.usda.gov/oce/waob/jawf/AgWxHighlights/TODAYSWX.PDF>